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Reccord resigns after report, 'controls'

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP and local reports) — Robert E. "Bob" Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), announced his resignation April 17 from the Southern Baptist entity he has led since its creation nine years ago, after agency trustees released a critical report and imposed "executive level controls."

Carlos Ferrer, NAMB's Chief Financial Officer, was named by trustees to serve as interim Chief Operating Officer until an interim president can be selected.

Speaking to nearly 200 NAMB staff members at NAMB's Atlanta-area offices, Reccord said he made the decision, which was effective immediately, with "mixed emotions."

"I am thankful for the countless numbers of people we have seen come to Christ and the thousands of churches we have seen planted and nurtured," he said. "On the other hand, I regret we were not able to complete a number of things we have started or dreamed about. I regret that events of recent weeks have created an environment which makes it difficult to lead the organization and to stay on mission."

The events to which Reccord referred resulted from a lengthy article two months ago in *The Christian Index*, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Convention. The article, which was critical of the entity's accomplishments and Reccord's leadership, led to an investigation by NAMB's board of trustees which

also was critical of some of NAMB's more innovative initiatives and decisions under Reccord's leadership.

Among the problems uncovered by *The Christian Index* and verified by the trustee investigation were expensive no-bid contracts to a friend of Reccord's; expenses billed to the agency for Reccord and his wife to attend the London premiere of *The Chronicles of Narnia*; extensive absences from his office; and an autocratic management style.

During his resignation announcement, Reccord told employees he has found it increasingly difficult to be an entrepreneurial leader within a denominational structure.

"I believe that honest philosophical and methodological differences have brought us to this point of separate directions," Reccord said. He added he hopes he has "demonstrated my love for and commitment to Southern Baptists and all for which we stand."



Reccord



Ferrer

"I also hope I have demonstrated a Kingdom heart and mindset," Reccord continued. "It is this mindset and my entrepreneurial bent that have led us to explore more effective applications of technology and media; strategies for reaching a wider range of demographic groups; and creative evangelism initiatives."

Barry Holcomb, chairman of NAMB's board of trustees, read a statement to the mission board's employees, acknowledging Reccord's accomplishments, integrity, and visionary leadership style.

"I stand here today with Dr. Reccord to say thank you for nine years of tireless service to the North American Mission Board," Holcomb said. "As an agency, we've seen growth in many areas, including increases in our church planting efforts, a significant increase in mission personnel and the dramatic increase and impact of our disaster relief work."

Holcomb said Reccord had "sought to provide leadership that was both consistent and visionary," and he emphasized that neither a special focused financial audit nor an investigation by the trustees themselves revealed evidence that Dr. Reccord had done anything unethical in his role as president.

"I believe that important fact has been lost in all the conversation and articles written about the report. Dr. Reccord's integrity is strong and solid today, and I want to emphasize it clearly."

Holcomb said, "Contrary to some opinions, Dr. Reccord is in no way being asked to resign, let alone forced to resign. He is taking this step for what he feels is best for Christ's Kingdom.... I believe that this is one of the strongest evidences of his personal character and integrity."

Holcomb, who is pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Andalusia, Al., acknowledged "there are times in the life of every agency when changes are made, not on the basis of crises, but in large part on the basis of vision."

Reccord told employees he doesn't know what he is going to do but has already received several calls asking him to consider various ministry opportunities.

"We will follow God's leadership to do what is best for the Kingdom," he said.

Junior High Bible Drill champions chosen



Winners selected during the statewide Junior High Bible Drill tournament on April 8 at First Church, Clinton, along with the managers of the annual event, were (from left): Glen Shows, consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministries Department (DFM) of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board; Rachel Chancellor, member of Hephzibah Church, Shubuta, third place; Marcus Peagler, director of the DFM department; Tiffany Dempsey, member of Weir Church, Weir, second place; Don Hicks, DFM consultant; and Molly Stillions, member of Oakhurst Church, Clarksdale, first place. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



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Hold the applause

The long tenure of North American Mission Board President Bob Reccord came to an end with his resignation on April 17, just weeks after trustees of the Southern Baptist Convention agency released a critical report and put him on notice that he would be subject to a set of "executive level controls" if he remained on the job.

By all accounts, that step was taken reluctantly taken by trustees after a shock-

ing analysis of NAMB's management in The Christian Index, the news journal of the Georgia Baptist Convention, and the equally troubling report commissioned by trustees that confirmed most of the Index's reportage.

To their credit, NAMB trustees fully released their 19-page report and made it available on the agency's web site at http://www.namb.net/atf/cf/CDA250E8-8866-4236-9A0C-C646DE153446/Trustee_Response_to_the_Christian_Index.pdf. Among the findings of the report:

- Over \$2.9 million in no-bid contracts were issued to companies owned by Steve Sanford, a friend of Reccord's and a member of a church formerly pastored by Reccord. Sanford's contracts included one in which an "audit" was conducted that recommended downsizing media operations at the agency. After NAMB employees were let go, much of their work was then turned over to Sanford's companies.
- NAMB paid travel expenses in the amount of \$3,771.64 for Reccord and his wife

to attend the London premiere of the movie, The Chronicles of Narnia. There was no indication in the trustee report that the trip was connected to official NAMB business.

- "The trustees were unaware of the fact that two outside firms were on retainer to provide PR (public relations) assistance to NAMB, especially given the fact that there are two NAMB employees on staff who are tasked with this responsibility."

The two outside public relations firms had been paid \$75,499.16, at the time of the trustee report.

- "The President has underdeveloped his relationships with state executive and conventions, and as a result, has given the appearance of a 'top down' leadership style that has hindered some relationships and some strategies like 'What Now?'"

- NAMB employees harbor a "fear of reprisals for asking tough questions or appearing to challenge the authority structure."

Perhaps Reccord is not a bad person, and perhaps those and the many other shortcomings listed in the trustee report were all mistakes of the head and not the heart. Still, all are egregious and even fatal mistakes for the leader of a major Southern Baptist agency who is responsible for the use of Cooperative Program funds given so sacrificially by the people in the pews.

Reccord was right to resign, but even in the embarrassment of the trustee report he was not able to take responsibility for his shortcomings. Excerpts from this letter of resignation include such statements as, "I regret that events of recent weeks have created an environment which makes it difficult to lead the organization

and to stay 'on mission,' and, "In my final analysis, I have found it increasingly difficult to be an entrepreneurial leader within a denominational structure."

In addition, other SBC leaders were quick to heap praises on a man who gave no-bid contracts to a friend and used NAMB funds to attend a movie premiere in London.

"As NAMB's first president, Dr. Reccord assumed a Herculean task in the launch of that new and expanded entity," SBC President Bobby Welch told Baptist Press.

Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, said in the same Baptist Press article, "He (Reccord) is both a visionary leader and gifted communicator, and I'm convinced he will have a significant and fulfilling ministry in the Lord's service for many years to come."

"Bob has been faithful to follow the Lord's leadership through his life and, no doubt, will continue to do so."

"While others might have placed their own personal well-being ahead of what was best for NAMB, Dr. Reccord is doing just the opposite," said Alabama pastor and NAMB trustee Chairman Barry Holcomb in a separate Baptist Press article. "I believe that this is one of the strongest evidences of his personal character and integrity."

Please. Bob Reccord may be a fine man and good friend to all, but he resigned the NAMB presidency in disgrace. Let's just leave it at that. The people in the pews are not fooled. They know exactly what happened.

If the moral and financial support for these agencies collapses while our leaders continue to pat themselves and each other on the back over scandals like this, they have no one to blame but themselves.

GUEST OPINION:



Get ready for marriage vote

By Penna Dexter
Dallas, Texas

Americans support traditional marriage. The conflict arises because homosexual advocates have managed to equate the quest for "gay marriage" with a struggle for equality in the eyes of the law. Lacking the will to make a moral judgment regarding the behavior that defines homosexuals, the Democratic Party has become the home for their agenda.

The votes in both houses of Congress this year will be strictly political, an effort to energize the bases of both parties in anticipation of the November elections. Yet marriage is a political winner.

In 2002 and 2004 Democrats learned the hard way that the pro-life position is a winning one. Does the lesson apply to marriage in 2006? It just might. Citizens across the nation understand — often better than their political leaders — that without constitutional protection, same-sex marriage eventually will be

imposed on the entire nation.

In March, the Senate Republican Policy Committee published a paper, entitled, Why a Marriage Amendment is Necessary, to help senators understand the threat to marriage and to remove the barriers to a yes vote on the marriage protection amendment. The paper, available at <http://rpc.senate.gov>, answers some common questions and arguments:

- Will a vote for the marriage amendment help me politically?

In most states the answer is yes. Even though polls show support for a federal Marriage Protection Amendment hovering at around 50%, actual support probably is higher. State marriage amendments have been wildly successful. The 19 states that have considered marriage amendments have passed them by an average vote of 71%.

- We don't need to amend the constitution because same-sex

marriage is an anomaly that will be confined to liberal Massachusetts.

Evidence to the contrary is mounting quickly. As of this writing, we await rulings from the top courts in Washington and New Jersey, either of which could become the second state joining Massachusetts in allowing same-sex marriage.

According to a March ruling by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, non-residents are prohibited from marrying there if their unions would not be legal in their home states. Washington has no such law. If marriage becomes legal in that state, it will become a marriage mecca for homosexuals. They'll return home and initiate court proceedings demanding recognition of their marriages.

- Let each state, even each church, define marriage.

The problems with this approach would, and probably will, fill another column. The short answer is: That idea would result in legal chaos and the eventual destruction of marriage.

Another question, of course is: Do you have your senators' and representatives' email addresses and phone numbers?

Dexter is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and an announcer on the new syndicated radio program, Life on the Line. Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Groups push federal marriage amendment

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) public policy entity and the advocacy offshoot of a well-known pro-family organization have collaborated to urge pastors to promote support for a federal amendment to protect marriage.

In a letter to all of the 43,600-plus Southern Baptist churches, the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and Focus on the Family Action (FOFA) — a group not affiliated with the SBC but associated with Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, Co. — asked pastors to help in seeking passage of the Marriage Protection Amendment, Senate Joint Resolution 1.

The letter was sent as the Senate moves toward what is expected to be a vote on the proposal in early June.

The amendment, which defines marriage as only between a man and a woman, is intended to protect the institution against continuing legal efforts to sanction homosexual marriage. So far, only Massachusetts has legalized same-sex marriage, but supreme courts in New Jersey, New York, and Washington could legitimize such unions before the end of 2006, according to a recent analysis by the Senate Republican Policy Committee.

In their letter, ERLC President Richard Land and FOFA chairman James Dobson told Southern Baptist pastors their assistance is needed to protect the family. Land and Dobson, two of the leaders in the campaign to enact a marriage amendment, urged them to "involve your congregation... in the battle to preserve the biblical definition of marriage in the face" of attacks from "radical liberal groups and homosexual activists."

Many senators have not announced their positions on the amendment, Land and Dobson said. "Your involvement will help ensure that each senator receives tangible evidence" of his constituents' support for protecting marriage, they wrote the pastors.

Their goal is to surpass a million postcards sent to senators' state offices, Land and Dobson said. The mailing, which was sent April 12, included sample postcards. Pastors also are encouraged to order sheets

of postcards without charge for members of their congregations to use. In addition, Land and Dobson asked pastors to mention the effort from the pulpit, "if God should lead you to do so."

Focus on the Family Action paid for, printed, and mailed the materials that were sent to SBC churches. FOFA is legally separate from Focus on the Family, the pro-life radio program and ministry Dobson started in 1977.

The proposed amendment says, "Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman."

In 2004, the Senate failed to provide an up-or-down vote to a similar amendment. Supporters gained only 48 of the 60 votes needed to halt debate and allow a vote — a procedure called invoking cloture. Fifty senators voted against cloture, thereby blocking a vote. It appears supporters of the amendment will have at least a few more votes this year.

The House of Representatives achieved a majority on a similar amendment in 2004, but the 227-186 vote fell far short of the required two-thirds majority, or 290 votes, needed for passage.

Ratification of an amendment to the federal constitution requires not only passage by two-thirds of both houses of Congress but approval by three-fourths of the states.

As if to drive home the need for a constitutional amendment, a Massachusetts second-grade teacher is in the spotlight for reading



HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA — A second-grade teacher in Massachusetts is being criticized after reading to her class a children's book entitled, *King and King*. In the book, a prince searches for a wife — only to pick another prince. In a page from the book depicted here, the two are "married." (BP image)

Record

Attorney: Support is OK

PHOENIX (BP) — Churches can support proposed constitutional marriage amendments without any fear of losing their tax-exempt status, an attorney with a religious liberty organization says. Seven states are scheduled to vote on marriage amendments this year, and conservatives in two others — Arizona and Colorado — are gathering signatures with the goal of being added to that list. Gary McCaleb, senior counsel with the Christian legal group Alliance Defense Fund, said pastors can voice support for the amendments from the pulpit and churches can assist in petition drives without fear of reprisal from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). "In respect to their Internal Revenue Service tax exemption, they have a lot of liberty and leeway to support a ballot initiative," McCaleb told Baptist Press. "As long as what they do is an insubstantial amount of their total budget, they're pretty much free to do whatever they want in support or opposition to the ballot initiative." Various courts have ruled that a "substantial amount" ranges anywhere from 5% to 15% of an organization's total resources, McCaleb said. So, if a church's budget is \$100,000 and it spends less than \$5,000 to support a marriage amendment — which would amount to less than five percent of the budget — "you're home free and clear as far as the IRS is concerned," McCaleb said. While IRS law is clear in allowing support for marriage amendments, state election laws occasionally are not. "[T]he bottom line is that this is clearly a constitutional right," he said of supporting a marriage amendment. "We would very readily stand in and defend a church that allowed petitions to be circulated on its premises, because we think that the laws that regulate are almost undoubtedly unconstitutional." The Alliance Defense Fund can be reached at 1-800-TELL-ADF.

ing a book about homosexual marriage to her young students.

The teacher at Joseph Estabrook Elementary School in Lexington, Mass., read to her class *King & King*, a colorful 29-page children's book in which a prince searches for a wife, only in the end to

choose another prince. The story ends with the two princes "marrying" and living "happily ever after." On the last page, the princes — now kings — even share a kiss.

The school superintendent is standing behind the teacher, saying the book is another way to teach the children diversity. "We couldn't run a public school system if every parent who feels some topic is objectionable to them for moral or religious reasons decides their child should be removed," Paul Ash told The Boston Globe.

Looking back

10 years ago

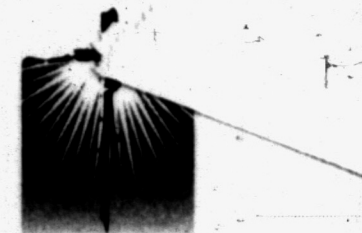
Four couples with Mississippi connections are commissioned as Southern Baptist missionaries in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, including John and Amy McKelvey, Steve and Ruth Robertson, Kelly and Jamie Zbinden, and Robert and Jamie Luper.

20 years ago

Leake Association's multi-church youth choir swells from 35 to 80 young people as preparations begin for a summer tour of the musical *Forever by David Clydesdale*. Five performances in three states are planned.

60 years ago

The Baptist Student Union at Mississippi Southern College in Hattiesburg makes the "First Magnitude" honor roll for the eighth consecutive year, based on "first honor work" by Baptist students.



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THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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IN SEARCH OF A SPARE TIRE

A spare tire for a car is absolutely invaluable. When the car was invented and people started driving around dirt paths, I wonder how long it took them to figure out that they had better have an extra tire when operating this machine or they would be in serious trouble all of the time. As a general rule, there is no other part of the car's operation for which we carry a back-up system except a tire. All you have to do is have one flat tire on some lonely, remote, desolate stretch of road and you will fall in love with your spare tire. Now, a spare tire may be just a circle of rubber attached to a wheel, but it is far more than that. It is a wonderful expression of help and even grace in time of need.

You see, a spare tire does for you what you cannot do for yourself. You can neither lift your car nor carry it on down the road once you have had a blowout. You need a spare tire.

The wonderful thing is that God has provided for us to have spare tires in our spiritual life. In fact, we have numerous spare tires when life goes flat. Sometimes there is the spare tire of prayer. At times it is the spare tire of inspiration and encouragement. Sometimes it is the spare tire of a caring fellowship that lifts us up and helps us along the road. God will never leave us or forsake us. He does not leave us alone in silent isolation as we have breakdowns and blowouts in life.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Recently a friend of mine traded cars. He got one of the smaller versions of an SUV. He and his wife were going to make a trip across country, and he was getting his new vehicle ready to go. He cleaned it up, made sure everything was in good running order, and just so he would be prepared in case anything happened out on the road, he started looking for the spare tire. Today some cars have that little doughnut spare that is not made for long road travel, others come with a full size tire, and others may come with no tire at all. He looked under the carpet covering in the back of the vehicle, and it was not there. He looked under the vehicle, and it was not there. He began to wonder if this particular car had a spare tire. He discussed it with his wife, and they agreed that maybe he needed to call the dealership and ask them if it had a spare tire and if so where it was. He did not call immediately but continued to wonder where it could be.

After some time had passed, he brought it up again to his wife and she responded, "Well, I know where the spare tire is."

He said, "You do! Well, where is it?" That is when she instructed him to look on the back door of their SUV, and there it hung bigger than the Empire State Building — four tires on the road and one big tire hanging on the backdoor. He was so embarrassed and at the same time so thankful that he had not called the dealership and asked them where the spare tire was on his vehicle. Later he thought about what they had been through and just wondered what the folks at the dealership would have said if he had called. Is this a joke? This is not a real phone call, is it? That is what he surmised they would think. The problem was that though the tire was full size and was right there even more noticeable than the tires on the ground, he just overlooked it.

While he was somewhat red-faced about the whole thing, it is even more amazing how much help, support, and how many spare tires are around all of us and we don't even see them. Hundreds of times through the years I have discovered a need in someone's life and in talking to him

or her about it I have asked, "Why didn't you tell someone or get some help?" They would respond with something like, "I didn't know if anyone cared." While there may be many deficiencies in the church and we may not always be the people that we want to be or God needs us to be, the fact is that in the genius of God's plan there are people who can lift us up, carry us along, make a difference in our lives, and support us when we have a flat tire and need a spare — but like my friend who had a spare but just could not locate it although it was out there in plain sight, we too overlook the amazing provisions of God.

I would like to make two suggestions. One, since you never know when you are going to need it, look around like my friend for the spare tires of life before the emergency comes. Two, realize that you may be the spare tire God has provided for someone else. Be available and accessible to them. Thank God for the many spare-tire Mississippi Baptists and Southern Baptists from across the nation who have arrived to help us on down the road since Katrina! Every one of you has helped make a difference, and continue to be a blessing.

Watch for folks stuck on the road and along the paths you travel today. You may be their spare tire.

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Jesus Christ

Requests the
Honor of
Your
Presence
in Heaven!

YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Kentucky family pays price for gambling's expansion

PIKEVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Suzi Flanagan Wright's husband liked to gamble every now and then and, early on, she'd gamble with him and use the winnings to help pay off her student loan. They regarded it as no big deal; they were just among the millions of Americans who gamble as a hobby.

Then things changed, leaving Suzi to deal with raising a child while her husband went to prison for embezzlement. She also faced large gambling debts and the ongoing challenge of loving an addicted gambler.

Her struggle began innocently enough. "One time I had left him at home and gone to Lexington to pick up his sister, and I had only left him with enough money to buy stuff for Thanksgiving dinner," Wright said. "After he came home, he said, 'I need more money. Don't you dare buy any lottery tickets.'"

Soon after she returned from the 280-mile round trip, Wright's husband revealed that he had won \$10,000 on a two-dollar lottery ticket. "That got him hooked," she said.

Now, with two bills before the Kentucky legislature for



the expansion of gambling, Wright fears the temptation to gamble will hit a little too close to home for more Kentucky families like hers.

Wright said that after her husband realized he needed to stop gambling and visited a psychiatrist who prescribed a heavy dose of Prozac for him, the doctor only made the gambling worse.

"It went to the point where he started taking money at work," Wright said. "He opened credit cards in my name and ran up balances. He would write checks on me. He

would do anything he could to get his money, and then he embezzled money from work and that wound him up in jail."

Wright's husband spent 20 months in prison when their son was just over two years old, and he missed many crucial moments in the child's early life, she said.

Although the prison sentence got Wright's husband's attention, it wasn't enough to stop the gambling.

Gambling has wrought damage on her family that may never be repaired, Wright said, and sometimes she lives

moment to moment just trying to trust her husband not to bring on more debt.

"It's just been a big mess. It's been seven years, and I really don't think I'm any better off," she said. "...I'm still paying on everything because I had to mortgage my home, I had to pay off all of those credit cards, I've got five and six and seven years left on bills."

"What makes me so mad is it takes away from my child," she said. "I make really good money, but you'd never know I had a dime because I have to pay it all out. [My husband] isn't working. Nobody will hire him and it's just a mess. And [my son] doesn't understand. How do you explain it to a child?"

Despite claims by gambling supporters, Wright has seen firsthand that it doesn't benefit schools. In addition to working fulltime, she volunteers at her son's elementary school because the school system can't afford to hire people to help them, she said.

"I don't see expanded gambling helping anything at all. I think all it can do is hurt people," Wright said. "...It will absolutely ruin more lives than it will help. I'm here to tell you that."

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Ala. church sets future after arson attack

BRIERFIELD, Ala. (BP) — A clearing in the woods has replaced Ashby Church's 87-year-old white frame structure in rural Alabama.

With the ashes and debris from its sanctuary and educational space cleared off the site, the church's long-range plans also have been cleared for a new beginning after it was among nine Alabama churches hit in the spate of arsons in early February.

Pastor Jim Parker said a blank slate is not necessarily a bad thing for the church site a quarter mile off Highway 139 at Brierfield. In fact, it's a challenge church members are getting more excited about all the time.

"For a lot of the folks here, losing their church building is like losing an old friend or friend of the family. You process it like you do death," Parker said, "but as the healing process has gone on, the people are getting ready to move forward and there are so many options on where to go from here."

A wide spectrum of vision-casting already has begun in Brierfield, a small community nestled in the top easternmost corner of Bibb County. The area has been catching some of neighboring Shelby County's population shift, so the church's new direction includes adjusting to reach more of those people, said Gary Swafford, director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of associational missions and church planting.

"In building their new church, they are talking about re-dreaming their dream and adopting a new vision to go with the new building, which is a good idea," Swafford said.

When representatives from the State Board of Missions visited the first five damaged churches just after the fires to offer monetary and prayer support, Swafford was in the background, offering demographic studies and church-building guidance for whenever the churches felt they were ready to start rebuilding.

Ashby Church quickly took him up on his offer.

"We got the demographic study done," Parker said, "and we used the projections to go ahead and extrapolate a number we believe we will have in each age group."

Currently, nearly all 150 church members will attend worship at some point during the month, averaging out at about 90 in attendance for each Sunday's morning service.

The new building is being planned for 300, and the congregation is considering moving from its current site in the woods to a more visible lot on the highway, Parker said.

"We figure that based on the demographic projections, in the next three to five years, we'll double," he said. "We trust the Lord on that. We have seen a lot of growth even in just the last six months, and we believe He wants us to grow."

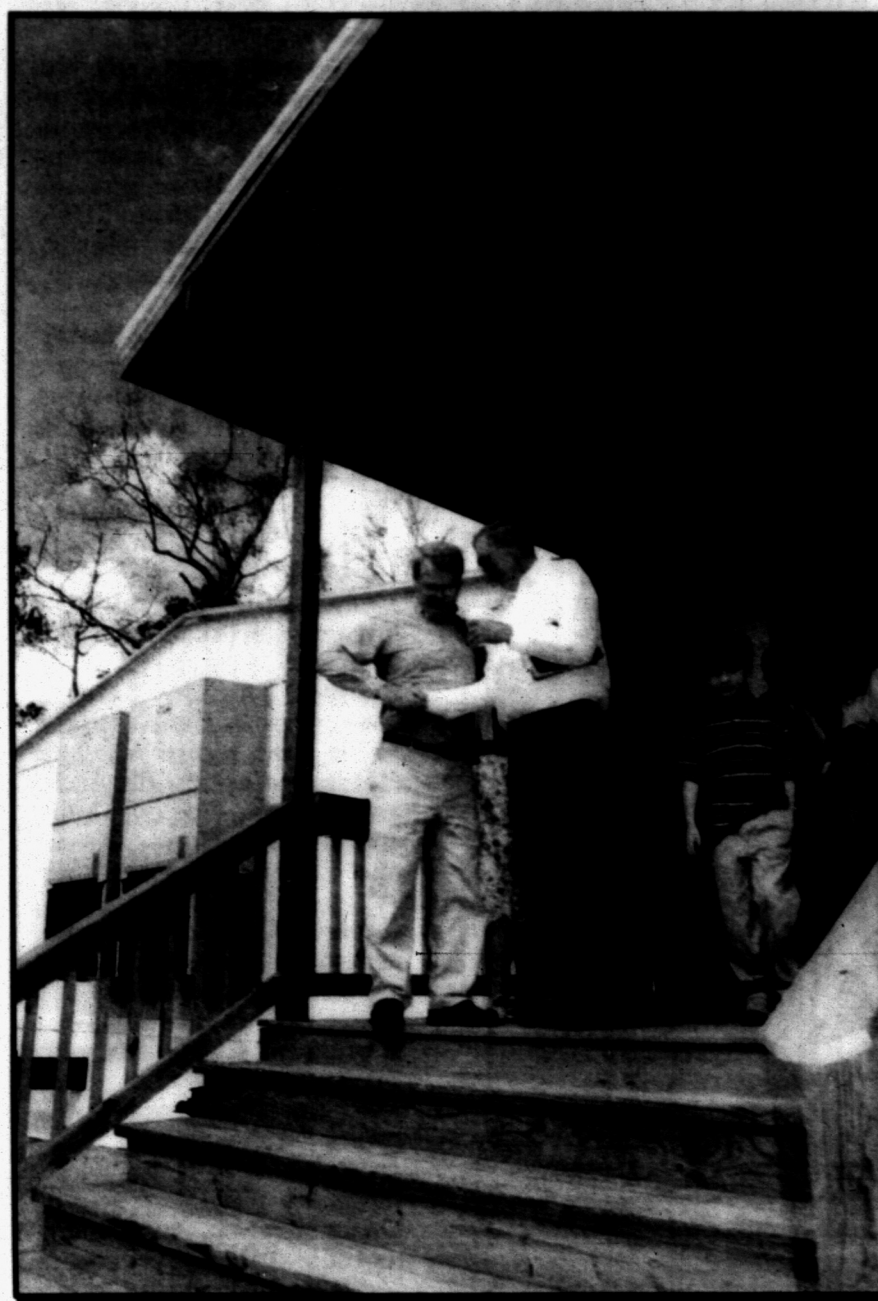
Before the fire, the congregation already had been weighing the decision of whether to relocate or add on to their current facilities.

"The Lord answered that question for us," church member Debbie Crocker said with a laugh. "There have been trials but we are making the best of it, and it is turning out to be a good thing."

The mobile chapels the church is using on loan from the Alabama missions board have been an incredible icing on the cake of instance after instance of help the church has received, Parker added. "We are so grateful to our Baptist brothers and sisters. They have taken such good care of us."

The church had its first service back on its site in the chapels March 12. It was so well attended by both members and media that they barely squeezed everyone in, Parker said. "Everyone was just so excited to be back; the spirit was great."

Editor's note: The author of this article, Grace Thornton, is assistant editor of The Alabama Baptist and a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton.



TEMPORARY HOME — Philip Hubbard (left) greets B.C. Crocker as the crowd trickles out of the mobile chapel being used by Ashby Church in Brierfield, Ala. The church lost its sanctuary and education space in the spate of arsons targeting rural Alabama churches in early February. (BP photo by Curry Evans)

Prof on leave after display destroyed

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, Ky. (BP) — A Northern Kentucky University (NKU) professor who instigated the destruction of a school-approved, pro-life display was placed on leave April 17.

NKU President Jim Votruba announced the action April 18, saying literature professor Sally Jacobsen had been removed from her classes through the end of the semester. Jacobsen already had decided to retire after the semester to close 27 years of teaching at the school.

Jacobsen reportedly led about 10 students April 12 in removing and throwing in the trash 400 crosses that made up a pro-life display titled the Cemetery of the Innocents.

Jacobsen declined to say if she took part, but a photo in the Internet edition of the school's newspaper April 13 appeared to show her destroying the display's sign, while small, white crosses lay on the ground around her, according to The Post.

Jacobsen, who has tenure, will not lose any retirement benefits, Votruba said, according to the newspaper. The punishment "should be considered in the context" of Jacobsen's 27-year career, he said.

The investigation into the incident is continuing. No penalties have been announced for the students who took part in the vandalism.

With about 14,000 students, NKU is located in Highland Heights, which is seven miles south of Cincinnati.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. First NMSEC Class Recognized, Lee-Itawamba Associations



2. Bible Drillers, Grace Church, Philadelphia



3. Bible Drillers, Belden Church, Belden



4. Bike-A-Thon, Raymond Road Church, Jackson

1. The first class of the Northeast Mississippi Extension Center, sponsored by the Lee-Itawamba Association, is recognized. Shown are Jimmy Dale Hutcheson, Kay Martin, and Thomas Majors.

2. Grace Church, Philadelphia, recognizes their state Bible drillers: Standing, from left: Brett Barfoot, Corey Sharp, Kooper Battle, Devin Hill, J.T. Holley, and Hailey Quarels; seated, from left: Andria Hamilton, Chelsey Spence, Mary Kathryn Asbill and Katlynn Carlton.

3. Belden Church, Belden, recognizes its Bible drillers: Front row, Molly Mitchell Golding, Cassidy Blaylock, and Caleb Fairley; back row, leaders Denise Asters and Christy Blaylock.

4. Raymond Road Church, Jackson, recently held a Bike-a-Thon to raise money for missions. Shown are Mission Friends, RAs, and GAs who participated and raised over \$700 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

5. Pleasant Hill Church, Olive Branch, recognizes its Bible drillers: Angelique McCrary, Morgan Green, and Will McCrary.

6. Lakeshore Church, Jackson, held its annual Valentine Banquet Feb. 18. Matt Leach, minister of music, is seen proposing to Jennifer Johnson of Madison during the banquet.

7. Lake Como Church, Bay Springs, recognizes the participants in their 2006 Children's Easter Celebration. Shown are the children.

8. Providence Church, Grenada County, recently ordained Hal Martin, Don Montgomery, and Billy Brown as deacons. Shown are Jack McRee, Martin, Montgomery, Brown, and Harvey Springer, pastor.

9. Highland Church, Laurel, is hosting a Celebrate the Vision weekend May 5-7. Guest speakers include Richard Lee, James Merritt, evangelist Jerry Chaddick, and music by Alicia Williamson Garcia. For more information, call (601) 428-8493 or visit www.highlandchurch.net.

10. South McComb Church, McComb, will celebrate 40 years of ministry to area preschoolers Apr. 30, 4 p.m. David Millican, speaker; special music by the children.



5. Bible Drillers, Pleasant Hill Church, Jackson



6. Valentine's Banquet, Lakeshore Church, Jackson



7. Easter Celebration, Lake Como Church, Bay Springs



8. Deacon Ordination, Providence Church, Grenada County

JUST FOR THE RECORD



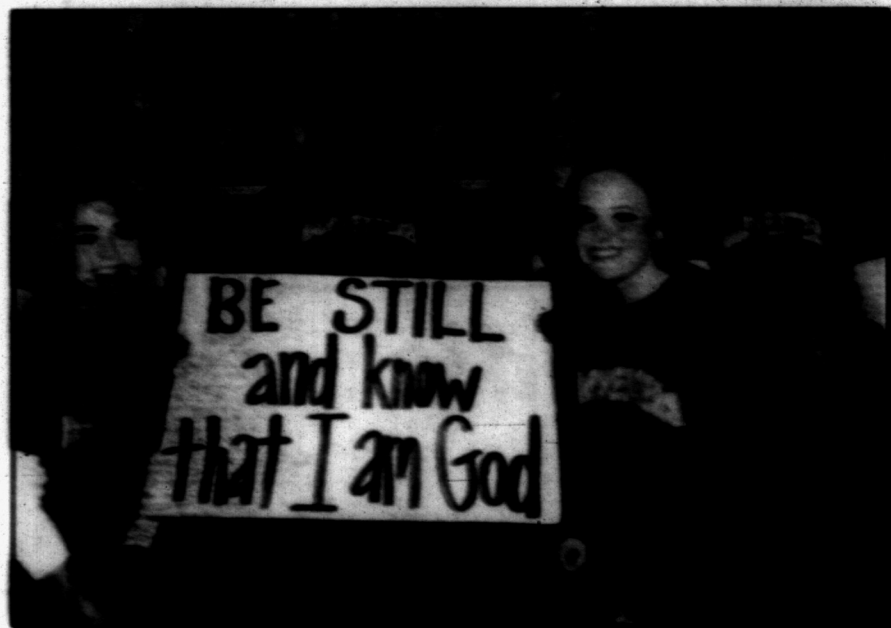
11. Bible Drillers, Drew Church, Drew



12. Bible Drillers, Raymond Road Church, Jackson



13. Farewell Reception for King, First Church, Pascagoula



14. The Harvesters Drama Team, Concord Church, Benton-Tippah

11. Drew Church, Drew, recognizes their youth and children Bible drillers. From right: leader Marsha House, Jenny Thorn, Joseph Cummins, Matt McCool, Tiffany Putnam, Kayla Burchfield, Kaci Mosco, Anna Melton, John Paul Phillips, and leader Mary Kathryn Kittrell.

12. Raymond Road Church, Jackson, recognizes their children's Bible drillers: front, from left, Ansley Myers, Brooks Warren, Courtney Evans; back, Jackie Winters (children's minister), Sara Hardin, Brandon Eady, Somer Warren, Hannah Dorman, and Rene' Warren, leader.

13. First Church, Pascagoula, hosted a farewell reception for Agnes King, who served as financial secretary for 30 years. She was presented a check and plaque at the morning service and received a necklace at her reception. Shown are pastor Rex Yancey and King.

14. Concord Church, Benton-Tippah Association, welcomed the BSU drama team from Northeast Community College, the Harvesters, on Mar. 19. Shown is the team.

15. Lake Harbor Church, Brandon, ordained J.R. Lee to the gospel ministry. Shown are Brian Hill, Lee and son Grayson, and Jayme Lee.

16. First Church, Iva, S.C., spent a week in March doing disaster relief work at the Jackson Association office in Pascagoula. Their work included repairs and painting to several area homes. Shown doing roof repair are, from left, Roy Esthrige, Brian Henry, Ken Jordan, Jerry Gray, Phillip Martin, Ed Higginbotham, and Wayne Reece.



15. Lee Ordination, Lake Harbor Church, Brandon



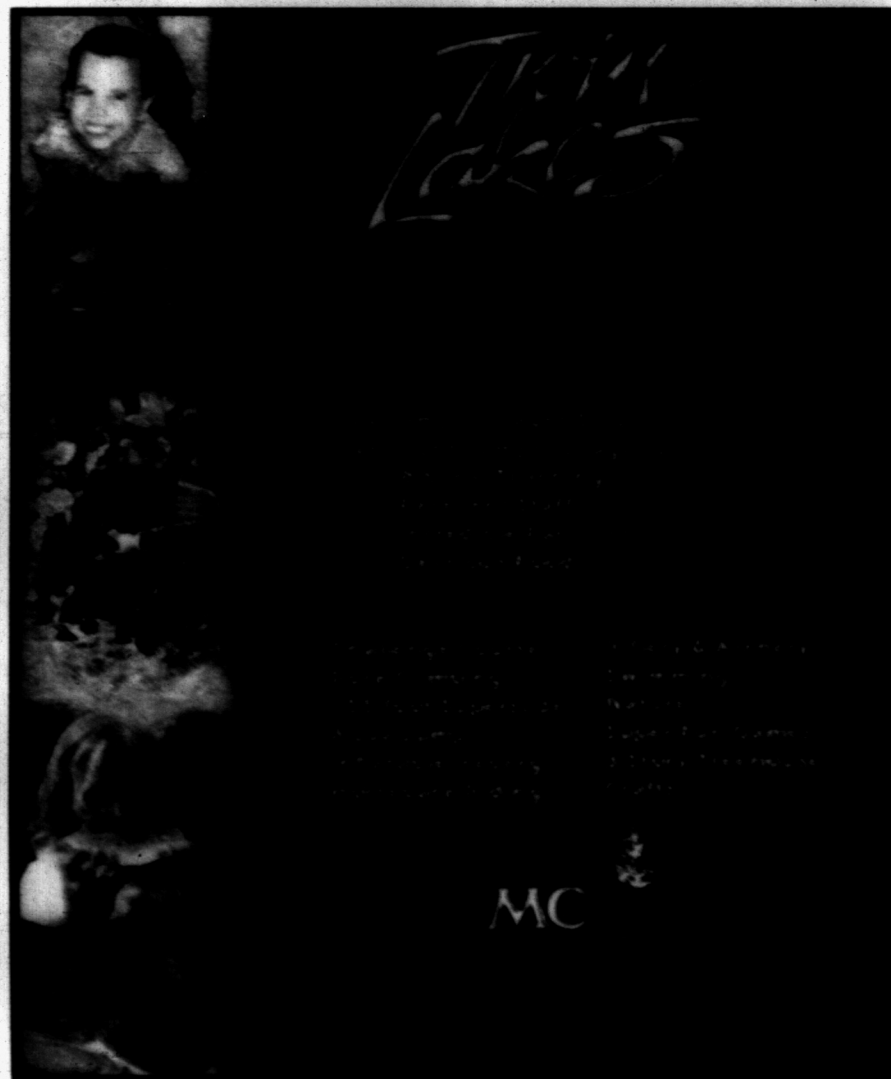
16. Disaster Relief Workers, First Church, Iva, S.C.

17. The youth groups from Sunrise Church and West Carthage Church, Carthage, held a retreat together at Central Hills. Shown are the participants.

■ ■ ■



17. Youth Groups, Sunrise and West Carthage Church, Carthage



STATE CHANGES



Fairley

West Marks Church, North Delta Association, has called Peter Fairley as pastor. Fairley has served churches in Winona,

Laurel, Decatur, and Fulton and is a graduate of William Carey College and Southern Seminary.

Highland Church, Laurel, has called Timothy Hubbard as minister of music and media. Hubbard previously served at Carterville Church, Petal. He comes with his wife Melaine and children Meredith and Lee.

West Heights Church, Pontotoc, has called Rob Ray as minister of students. Ray and his wife Christy come from First Church, Water Valley.

Bibliocipher

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OWZ XAN UWZM WO
PWM BE IHBLR, CKM
JWUNZOHS, CKM EACZJNZ
XACK CKT XUWNMPNM
EUWZM, JBNZLBKP NQNK
XW XAN MBQBMKP
CEHKMNZ WO EWH
CKM EJBZBX, CKM WO
XAN DWBKXE CKM GCZZ-
WU, CKM BE C
MBELNZKNZ WO XAN
XAWHPAXE CKM BKNKXE
WO XAN ANCZX.

ANFZNUE OWHZ:

XUNSQN

Clue: U = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: James One:Thirteen.

1. For more than 50 years, Johnnie Armstrong has been an influence on the campus of Blue Mountain College and in the world of women's athletics. During the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics' annual conference held in San Diego, Johnnie Armstrong was recognized for her meritorious service and inducted into the NAIA's Hall of Fame. Nationally, she served on the NAIA District Executive board, the Mid-South Region coordinating committee, and chaired the NAIA and TransSouth Athletic Directors groups. Armstrong has been named the District 24 Female Athletics Administrator of the Year, the NAIA Athletic Administrator of the Year, and has received the Pathfinder Award and the Blue Mountain Outstanding Faculty Member Award. In 2003, the campus fitness center was named in her honor.



Armstrong

2. Ginger Elizabeth de Toledo, former food service and hospitality coordinator at First Baptist Church of Hattiesburg, is the new director of alumni relations at William Carey College.

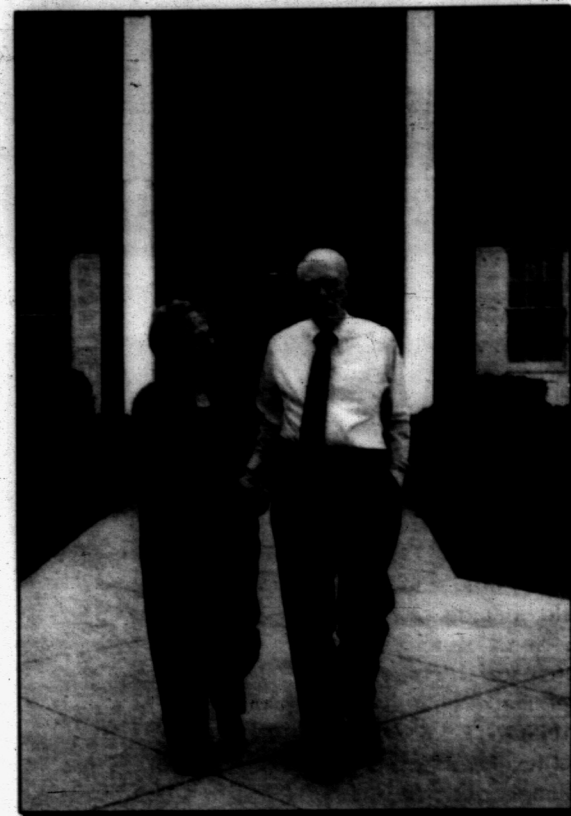


Toledo

3. The commencement speakers for William Carey College's four graduation ceremonies have been announced. Annie Peters Wimbish, Superintendent of the Hattiesburg Public School District; Lee Royce, president of Mississippi College; and Glenn East, Superintendent of the Gulfport School District will speak to the approximately 562 graduates at four different ceremonies. All four graduation ceremonies will take place in the Dumas Smith Auditorium on the Hattiesburg campus. Wimbish will speak May 19 at 7 p.m. to graduates receiving business, education, and psychology and counseling master degrees. Royce will speak to the undergraduates in the School of Arts, Humanities and Sciences, Cooper School of Missions and Biblical Studies, the Winters School of Music, and the school of psychology and counseling Saturday, May 20 at 9:30 a.m. and the undergraduates in the School of Business, School of Education and School of Nursing at 1 p.m. East will speak to both undergraduate and graduate candidates from the Gulfport and Keesler Air Force Base campuses at 4 p.m.

4. The newly constructed Donnell Hall, which will house the Center for Study of the Life and Work of William Carey, will be dedicated with an official ceremony May 3 at 3 p.m. on the Hattiesburg campus of William Carey College.

5. Donna and Milton Wheeler are pictured here in front of the William Carey College alumni house which will be dedicated the Donna Wheeler Alumni House in ceremonies to be held April 29 on the Hattiesburg campus. The newly constructed baseball field will be named in honor of Milton Wheeler.



Donna Wheeler Alumni House, WCC

REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Blackhawk Church, Coila:
Homecoming, May 7, 10:30 a.m., and revival, May 8 - 10, 7 p.m. nightly; Slaton Family, music, homecoming; Dennis McKay, speaker.

Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto:
Homecoming, May 7; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; cemetery fund offering taken during service; Emon White, speaker; Trent Bilbo, pastor.

Cedar View Church, Olive Branch:
Revival, May 14 - 17; Sunday, 8 and 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; meals, Mon. - Wed. at 6 p.m.; Phil Glisson, speaker; Sid McNeil, music.

Lake Como Church, Bay Springs:
Revival, May 20 - 24; 7 p.m. nightly; Bill Riley, speaker; Endless Praise, music; Kevin Bishop, pastor.



New Sight Church, Brookhaven:
Homecoming, May 7; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:45 a.m.; lunch following service and afternoon singing; Johnny Sykes, speaker.

Pheba Church, Pheba:
Homecoming, May 21; worship, 11 a.m., followed by meal and fellowship; Andre Dobson, speaker.

Woodlawn Church, Vicksburg: 60th anniversary and revival, Apr. 26 - 30; 6:30 p.m. nightly; dinner on the grounds Apr. 30; Jack Moore, Larry McEwen, and Gerald Martin, speakers; Bill Britton, music.

Wheeler Grove Church, Alcorn Co.:
Revival, Apr. 30 - May 3; Danny Lanier, speaker; special singing nightly. For information, call (662) 287-2764.

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THE GEORGE/GREENE AREA MISSIONS PROGRAM is now receiving resumes for the position of associational missions director. Please send to George/Greene area missions, P.O. Box 93, Lucedale, MS 39452. Resumes will be received through June 1, 2006.

TWIN LAKES BAPTIST CHURCH IN MADISON seeking a part-time minister of Students. Send resumes to Hugh Smith, 673 Lake Cavalier Rd., Madison, MS 39110 or call (601) 856-2305.

MT. OLIVE BAPTIST CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, has a need for a part-time choir/music leader. Please send resume to Rt. 1, Box 183, Coila, Miss., 38923 or call (662) 455-3892 after 6 p.m.

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PARKVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA, seeks full-time minister of education. Send resume to Parkview Baptist Church, minister of education search committee, 2101 MacArthur Drive, Alexandria, LA 71301.

Blackaby takes Prayer Day role

WASHINGTON (BP) — As the honorary chairman of this year's National Day of Prayer, Henry Blackaby will address hundreds of government officials and other dignitaries on May 4.

Not surprisingly, the noted Southern Baptist discipleship leader wants Christians to pray about his upcoming message at the Cannon Office Building, since he considers this year's observance one of the most crucial in the 54-year history of the National Day of Prayer.

Ominous threats from terrorists and the moral decay of American society are two factors making prayer vital to the nation's future, Blackaby said.

"I think it will be an astounding gathering that will have far-reaching implications. That's why I think the message that will be brought will be absolutely crucial," said Blackaby, whose message will reflect the theme of "America, Honor God."

Citing increased media exposure and a growing grassroots coordinator base, Shirley Dobson — longtime chairperson of the National Day of Prayer Task Force — expressed a great sense of anticipation about the upcoming observance.

Among this year's "firsts" will be events at the base of Mount Rushmore and at the North



Blackaby

Pole in Alaska; as elsewhere, people at each locale will intercede for the nation and its leaders, Dobson said.

During his speaking engagements this year, Blackaby has been showing a DVD spotlighting the National Day of Prayer and promoting two related books he has coauthored:

- **Experiencing Prayer with Jesus** (Multnomah Publishers), which he wrote with his youngest son, Norman, the new senior pastor of Marcum Street Church in Little Rock, Ark.

- **Fresh Encounter: A 28-Day Devotional Guide** (LifeWay

Christian Resources), a reformatted version of the popular study by Blackaby and Claude King designed for use in churches in the month leading up to the National Day of Prayer.

"The nation that honors God, He will honor," Blackaby said. "When God honors a nation, it is awesome — but a nation that turns from God is in grave danger. He orchestrates the affairs of nations. He raises nations up and brings them down."

Since it was established in 1952 through a joint resolution of Congress, Blackaby said the National Day of Prayer has played a significant role in steering the nation's attention toward God.

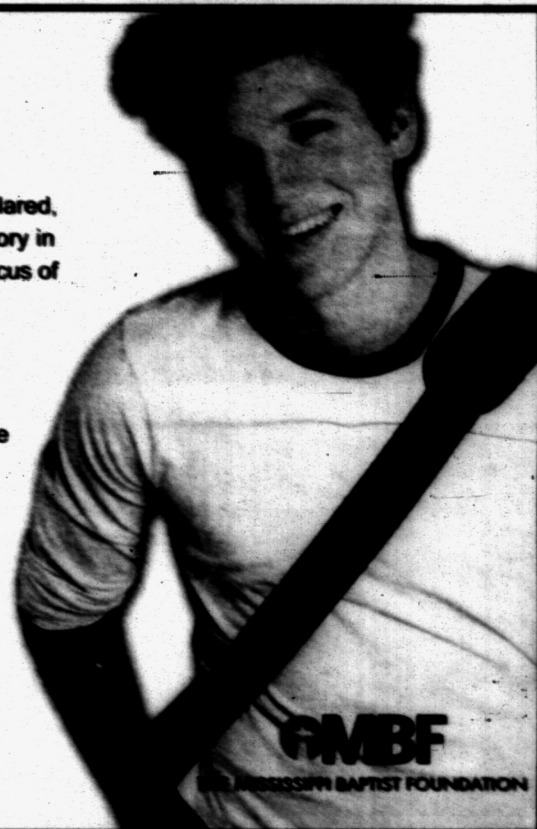
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For more information about the Mississippi Baptist Foundation Scholarship Ministry, please contact our office at Post Office Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205, telephone us at (601) 292-3210, or (800) 748-1651, or visit our website, www.mbcf.org/agencies/mbf. A completed application must be received in the MBF office by April 30.



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Mr. Chris Padilla
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Mary H. Reid
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Mrs. Irene B. Lancaster
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Glenda & Jerry Fry
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Friendship BC-Ecu
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Mr. & Mrs. Ernest L. Scruggs
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Karlton Wood
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Mrs. Wood
Mr. & Mrs. Billy E. Trim

IMMEDIATE JOB OPENING

The Baptist Children's Village has an immediate opening for the position of
Heath Services Coordinator
on the India Nunnery Campus in Jackson, Mississippi.

Responsibilities:

- Is a Christian person who maintains a Christ-like attitude in dealing with people within and outside The Baptist Children's Village ministry.
- Demonstrates behaviors aligned with The BCV mission. Must be compassionate and appropriately nurturing for children dealing with medical needs.
- Work as the liaison between the residents, the houseparents and the physicians.
- Schedules appointments and transports residents to medical, dental, vision and psychiatric appointments. Procures and distributes resident prescriptions.
- Primary CPR and First Aid instructor for agency (current certification not necessary at time of hire). Maintain medical documentation. Monitor and document insurance coverage of residents.

Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in Social Work or related field preferred
- Minimum age 25 years
- Excellent people/relationship skills
- Excellent organizational skills
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Excellent team building and facilitation skills
- Excellent driving record
- Strong computer skills with experience in word processing, spreadsheets, and data entry

All qualified candidates should go to www.baptistchildrensvillage.com or email Shae Scarbrough at scarbrough@baptistchildrensvillage.com or contact her at 601-922-2242.

Visit The Baptist Children's Village website to access these latest features

Order Mother's Day Offering Materials

Order BCV 2006 VBS Leader FREE

Resource Guide: Adventures in Missions

Register for the 2006BCV Alumni Reunion

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

You Have the Power

Acts 2:1-4, 22-24, 32-33, 36-41

By Huey Dedmon

As a young person growing up in Vicksburg, Mississippi, I became interested in mechanical things, especially Volkswagens. My first car was a 1966 Volkswagen beetle. It had a 40 horsepower engine. As I learned to repair the mechanical problems of my car, I also became interested in how I could improve the horse power. Even today, many people buy a car or truck based on how much power the engine produces. Power is very important in a truck or car and it is also very important in the life of a Christian.

In Acts 2:1-4 we find the disciples all together in one place waiting for the promise of power that Jesus had made them. Suddenly the house they

were in was filled with the sound of a violent, rushing wind which came from heaven.

Tongues like flames of fire appeared and rested on each of the disciples. The Holy Spirit filled them and they were given the power to speak in different languages. (HCSB, v. 1-4) The disciples needed this power because they were surrounded by devout Jews from every nation and they spoke many different languages. (v. 5) Just when they needed the power to communicate the gospel message, they received it. That is what the Holy Spirit does for all witnesses. The Holy Spirit lives in and empowers the believer to be witnesses for Christ.

There are two major issues we must face as Christians. We



Dedmon

These simple men of Galilee were speaking to them in their own languages. Those present were astonished and amazed at what they were experiencing. As a member of a FAITH team, I am astonished every week at how the Holy Spirit works. It is not the words we say, it is the conviction of the Holy Spirit in a person's life that brings them to salvation. This leads directly into the second issue we must face as Christians. Not only do we need to realize that the Spirit will empower us, we need to resolve to be used by the Holy Spirit. As a believer we are commanded and commissioned to GO! It is up to us to obey.

must realize that the Spirit of God can and will give us the power we need to be an effective witness. The disciples, on the Day of Pentecost, experienced this power in a most unusual way. As the crowd gathered, they could not believe what they were hearing.

Not only does the Holy Spirit empower us, the Holy Spirit also uses the message we are proclaiming. (v. 22-25) Peter stood before the crowd and proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus as the centerpiece of the gospel message. In verse 36, Peter testified to the onlookers that the man they had crucified a few weeks earlier, by the very plan of God, and by the hand of God was made both Lord and Messiah. Jesus was the promised Messiah that they had been waiting for, and His resurrection proved He was the Messiah. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to do the work God has given Him to do. He takes the message of the gospel and interprets it to a person's heart which results in that person giving their life to Christ.

The response to the message that Peter was preaching is seen in verses 37-41. Many in the crowd were "pierced to the heart." (HCSB, v. 37) This piercing of the heart caused them to ask, "Brothers, what must we do?" (HCSB, v. 37) Peter responded by

telling them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah. (v. 38) The work of the Holy Spirit always brings us to a response. The disciples responded to the empowering of the Spirit by going about the city and preaching the message of Jesus Christ. Some 3,000 people that day responded to the gospel by accepting the preached message of salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Through that salvation experience, they also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They received the power of God that not only brought them to salvation, but the power of God that enabled them to tell someone else. No matter where we start out, if we claim to be believers, saved by the message of Jesus Christ, we end up at the same place. We have a message and we have the power that enables us to tell the message. Why aren't all Christians enthusiastically and consistently sharing the message?

Dedmon is minister of education at First Church, Grenada.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Find Hope in God's Greatness

Isaiah 44:16-22; 46:1-5, 8-9

By Lori Clendinning

Who is there like our God? None can compare, although many have tried to usurp His place. This week's lesson in Isaiah 44 focuses on the folly of false worship or idolatry. No other being or object can be compared to the living God. We must refuse to worship any being or object that tempts us to substitute for our Lord. He alone is great and worthy to be praised.

Many adults pay lip service to the Lord while allowing various other things to take priority in their lives. Such priorities may include entertainment, work, prized possessions, or even the pursuit of knowledge. While many of these things are not wrong in themselves, they become idols when we worship them or give them the pri-

ority that rightfully belongs only to God.

God wants people to recognize that He alone is the living Lord who created them and only He can meet their deepest needs. Adults must worship Him alone.

Idol worship takes many forms and has been a problem for humans from the Old Testament days until now. Isaiah was an eighth century BC prophet who alerted God's children to their shortcomings, including idol worship, and he prophesied about God's judgments and mercies to come. This was precisely evident when Isaiah wrote of a future Persian king named Cyrus who would permit the exiled Jewish nation to return to Jerusalem.

In sixth century BC, some 150 years later, Israel was released from Babylonian cap-



Clendinning

538-529 BC. Cyrus overcame the Babylon armies and gave the captive Jews permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. He also suggested that anyone not able to help with the physical task of rebuilding the temple should assist by selling their personal possessions to help pay down the debt of the building fund.

Through both men, God attempted to rid His children of their idols. First, Isaiah prophesied against the practice of idol worship, and then Cyrus advised that the people sell their precious belongings, including the troublesome man-made idols that they had become fond of during their Babylonian exile.

tivity by Cyrus II, the son of Cambyses I. King Cyrus had been especially kind toward the Jews and open to the Lord's leading, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:22, "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia."

There is a sharp contrast between the worship of God and idol worship: Idol worship blinds and burdens, but worship of God blesses and bears up.

By following Babylonian worship practices, the people of Israel had become spiritually blind. They were unable to discern the true identity of the only living God. As Isaiah wrote of their idols in 44:18 "They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand." How like their idols the worshipers became, unable to see or understand.

God reminds His children that He had forgiven their sins and that they were His servants in Isaiah 44:21-22. He spoke of redemption and blessing, gifts that He still offers today to repentant hearts. Worshiping God as the one and only true God leads believers to receive wondrous blessings from Him.

God is alive and able to move as He pleases. The Israelites were terribly bur-

dened by their heavy, lifeless idols. They had to load them on their backs and beasts in order to lug them back home to Jerusalem. As Isaiah wrote in 46:1-2: "Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low... they are a burden for the weary." Bel, or Baal, was the chief Babylonian god, and Nebo was his son, also worshiped as a savior god. Worshipers were expected to pay homage to the idols several times throughout the day and evening.

For the true believer, worship of God always bears up when life gets overwhelming. Only God can carry us through when times get tough. He hears us even before we cry out to Him. He knows us and cares about us during every moment of our lives. He alone can hold us together when we are coming apart.

God is great and worthy to be praised. Let us come before Him with our worship. Let us have no other gods before us, for He is the one true God.

Clendinning is a member of First Church, Brandon.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing,

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Tennessee Baptist vols turn out for baptism campaign

COOKEVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — More than 700 volunteers from a single Baptist association knocked on nearly 7,000 doors to share the Gospel in a Tennessee community on April 8, and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Bobby Welch believes it was a key event in the grander scheme of accomplishing the goal set forth in the Everyone Can Kingdom Challenge! for evangelism.

Crossover Cookeville was modeled after the evangelism event that has for years preceded the SBC annual meeting, but Welch said it went a step further by tying into the associational baptism rallies he challenged each Baptist association to conduct.

"I think Cookeville — as well as what we're seeing happening now with associational baptism rallies across the country but overwhelmingly in North Carolina — is giving clear indication that our people are beginning to see the value and rediscover the spiritual synergy of uniting in their common effort for evangelism," Welch told Baptist Press.

After a day of knocking on Cookeville doors in inclement weather, volunteers from the Stone Association returned to their churches the following morning to share the excitement with their congregations. Then 800 of them packed the auditorium of First Church in Cookeville on Sunday night to celebrate the results of their efforts.

Most of the service was televised in the city, and about 20 people made professions of faith and others made some sort of spiritual decision during the service.

"It was really something. We had hundreds of people who got down on their knees and committed themselves to go out and try to share the Gospel with other people," Welch said.

The event drew more Baptists than any associational event in the last 28 years, said Frank Hickman, the association's director of missions. It also drew members of a majority of the association's 41 churches, which include a Hispanic and a Chinese mission congregation.

At last year's SBC annual meeting in Nashville, Welch launched an initiative



Volunteers from the Stone Association prayed with a couple outside their home in Cookeville, Tenn., during a Crossover event on April 8. Bobby Welch, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said the evangelism effort is a model for accomplishing the goal of the "Everyone Can" Kingdom Challenge. (BP photo courtesy of Connie Davis Bushey/Baptist and Reflector)

to see one million baptisms within the convention between Oct. 1, 2005, and Sept. 30, 2006 — the Everyone Can Kingdom Challenge! for evangelism. Then he urged local Baptist associations to join together to do their part in reaching people for Christ by holding at least two associational baptism rallies.

"I'm seeing this almost every night in North Carolina," Welch said, drawing a parallel to the Cookeville rally and similar gatherings he has been attending in the lead-up to the SBC annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C., June 13-14.

In an interview with Baptist Press regarding the Cookeville initiative, Welch recalled his words during his first news conference after being elected president of the convention in 2004 as well as a crucial message he had painted on the bus used for his 50-state tour that year.

"If you'll remember all the way back to Indianapolis, in that press conference I said the failure of the convention is its inability to create unity of purpose that in turn generates spiritual synergy for the sake of evangelism," he said. "And remember it said on the side of the bus, 'Do all you can with all you have where you are now.' Well, that is everybody getting on the same page and doing what they can in their Jerusalem and then putting it together. I think what we're seeing now is they are getting this. They are beginning to focus."

Welch made clear that people throughout the convention mostly understood the concept of doing all they can with all they have, but now they're putting it into practice at a greater rate.

He pointed to North Carolina, where about 95% of the state's 80 associations have made commitments to be part of

the unified effort to witness to, win and baptize one million people.

"That's phenomenal. That's one state," he said, "and this didn't come down as some edict from on high — this came from a grassroots conviction of pastors and people in these associations that we will do better if we rise together, and they are! That's exhilarating to me."

Cookeville, Welch said, is "a fresh new dynamic to the whole idea of unifying as an association in baptism rallies. Cookeville was a Crossover effort by an association. That adds a whole other component."

"Here what we probably have in front of us now are the pieces to the next part of this puzzle to reach these million baptisms," he said. "That is, I right now fully expect that there will be associations who will now go out on Saturday and do their own Crossover in their own association, go on Sunday and tell the story and then some of them Sunday night will meet at a public spot and have an outdoor baptism rally. I fully expect that to happen."

What happened in Cookeville could easily happen in Wyoming or Texas or California, Welch said, and the folks there have helped cast a vision for churches across the nation to combine a local Crossover effort with a baptism rally to create more synergy in the effort to reach people for Christ.

"This is so exciting," he said. "We are now seeing fresh and new associational life as it was always meant to be among the churches of a community. This is bringing back a unity of purpose, and the unity of purpose is bringing back a unity of excitement and the thrill of being a critical part of a larger whole. That's groundbreaking in some of these associations."

If every association in every state makes the same commitment that North Carolina has, Welch said, and if they follow through with associational Crossovers and associational baptism rallies, the opportunities for expanding the Kingdom of God are limitless.

"This has the possibility of becoming an absolute national blaze for revival," he said. "It really is starting to happen."

So. Baptist baptisms head down again after upswing in 2004

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Recently compiled statistics for the Southern Baptist Convention show that baptisms, which rebounded in 2004 after a four-year decline, slumped again in 2005, according to LifeWay Christian Resources President and CEO Thom S. Rainer.

According to the Annual Church Profile (ACP), information gathered by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, baptisms last year dropped from 387,947 to 371,850, or down 4.15%.

"Southern Baptists should view this report as a wakeup call," Rainer said, noting that the totals for baptisms dropped to the lowest since 1993. "We must focus our efforts, prayers and resources on reaching people for Christ. Baptism is the outward act of obedience that pictures God's work of redemption in a believer's life, and so for Southern Baptists the ACP figures indicate we are faltering in our efforts to reach a lost world."

There was growth in some areas, however. The ACP showed a net increase of 234 churches established in 2005 for a total of 43,699, up from 43,465 in 2004.

Total membership increased slightly to reach 16,270,315, and total receipts and missions expenditures were up.

Other key areas that saw decreased enrollment were Sunday School (8,068,780,

down 137,660), men and boys mission education (388,264, down 34,943) and WMU enrollment (804,983, down 162,848).

The totals for several categories were impacted by the fact that 33 associations in Texas did not ask all of the 2005 ACP questions. This impacted discipleship training, music ministry, WMU, men/boys mission education, total gifts, and the value of congregational property.

Rainer also pointed out that the impact of the hurricanes on the Gulf Coast in 2005 is not fully known. While the state conventions involved made efforts to minimize the impact on reporting and statistics, three of the state conventions in the affected area — Florida, Mississippi, and the Baptist General Convention of Texas — reported a loss in total membership, while two — Alabama and Louisiana — reported slight gains.

Total offering receipts were up \$550,347,520 to more than \$10.72 billion, Rainer reported. Total mission expenditures increased 2.82%, Rainer pointed out, bringing receipts to \$1.23 billion.

"Last year was a difficult year for Southern Baptists and the communities where they minister," Rainer said. "While natural disasters dominated the headlines, relief and rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast and Southeast Asia captivated the hearts of our churches. Southern Baptists have been blessed with bountiful resources and in 2005 we saw the church respond in unprecedented ways both home and abroad."

Item/Statistic	Final 2005	Final 2004	2005-2004 Numerical Change	2005-2004 Percent Change
State Conventions	41	41	0	0.0%
Associations	1,162	1,161	-1	-0.1%
Churches	43,699	43,465	234	0.5%
Total Membership	16,270,315	16,257,484	22,831	0.1%
Baptisms	371,850	387,947	-16,097	-4.1%
Gifts of Baptisms Total Membership	144	143	1	0.7%
Other Statistics	283,448	484,688	-201,240	-41.5%
Sunday School Enrollment	8,068,780	8,206,440	-137,660	-1.7%
Discipleship Training Enrollment (1) (2)	1,007,700	2,387,240	-1,379,540	-57.8%
Music Ministry Enrollment (3) (4)	1,007,700	1,007,700	0	0.0%
WMU Enrollment (5)	804,983	967,821	-162,838	-16.8%
Mission Education Enrollment (6)	388,264	423,207	-34,943	-8.3%
Total Gifts, Offerings, & Special Gifts (7)	\$10,720,315,315	\$10,169,967,440	\$550,347,875	5.4%
Mission Expenditures	\$1,230,000,000	\$1,200,000,000	\$30,000,000	2.5%
Total Mission Expenditures	\$1,230,000,000	\$1,171,107,000	\$58,893,000	5.0%
Value Congregational Property (8) (9)	\$48,776,041,200	Not Asked in 2004	(N/A)	(N/A)
Churches	43,699	43,465	234	0.5%
Church-to-Mission Operations	4,150	4,000	150	3.8%

1. The 2005 Discipleship Training Enrollment is a new item. In the previous item, persons could be counted more than once (reported for each group in which they participated). In 2005, the item was changed to count persons only once regardless of how many churches in which they participated.
2. 33 associations in Texas did not ask this item or the information necessary to obtain the item.
3. Data not reported by TX.

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